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ISSUE 91 WINTER/JANUARY 2023

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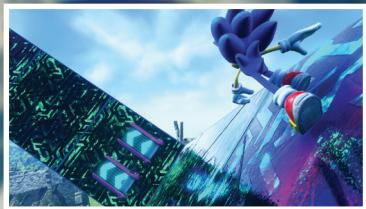
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## feature



## cover story



SAY HELLO (AGAIN) TO THE XBOX SERIES S

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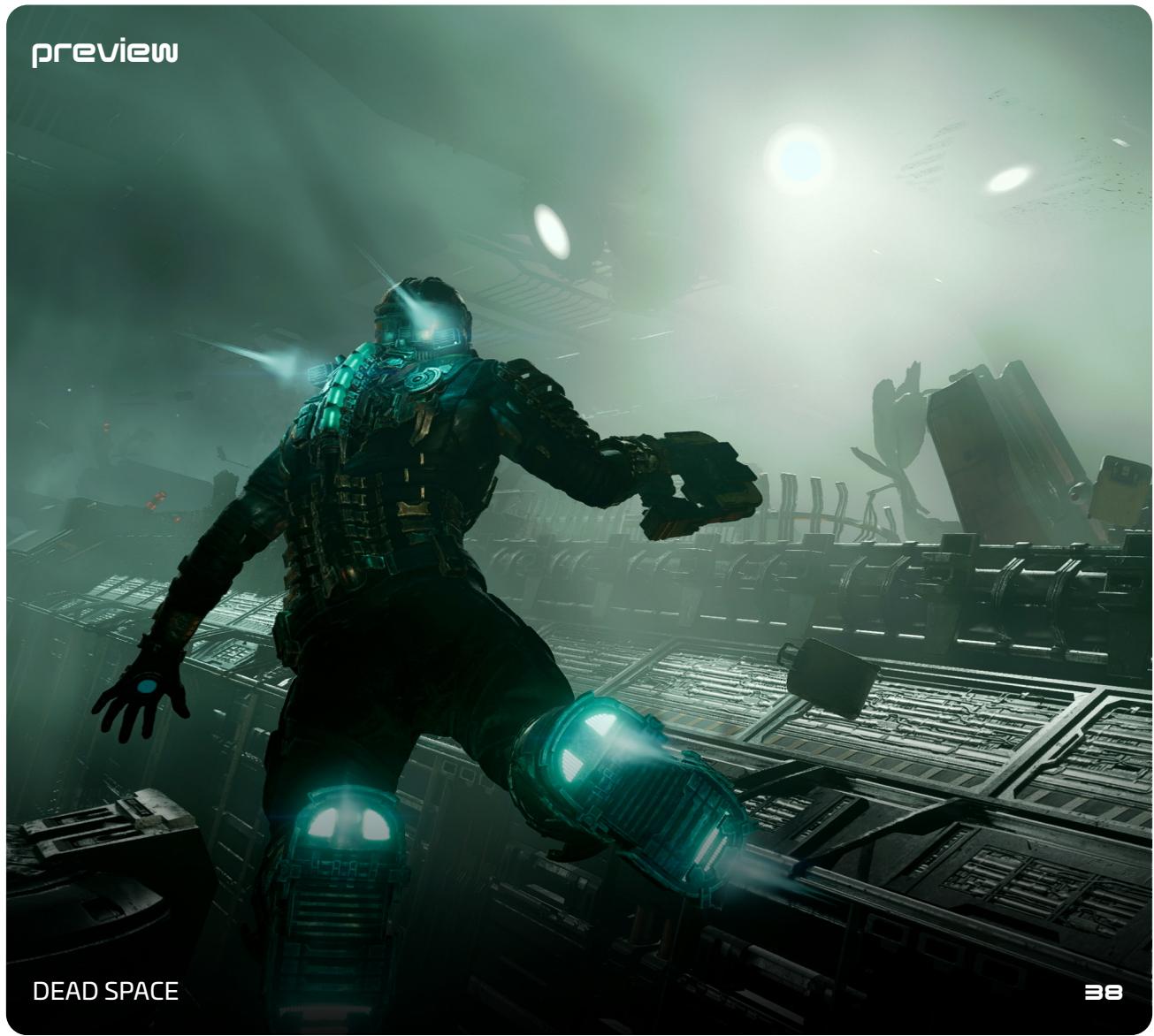
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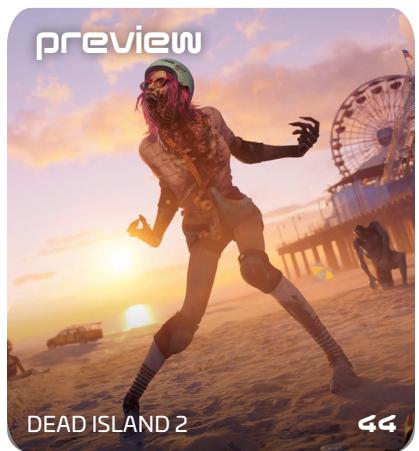
## preview



DEAD SPACE

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## preview



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## review



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# welcome

FROM THE EDITORS



## TURN THE PAGE

**F**irst we kick off 2023, it's the perfect time to look back on what 2022 meant for video gaming, and the many surprises the year had in store for us.

There's no question that the past 12 months brought us some truly spectacular games, no matter which platform you chose to play on. PlayStation bookended the calendar with two thrilling single-player releases: *Horizon Forbidden West* in February and *God of War Ragnarök*—be sure to check out our review at the back of this issue—in November. The Nintendo Switch got a massive RPG in the form of *Xenoblade Chronicles 3* and a much anticipated new family-friendly shooter, *Splatoon 3*. And while Microsoft didn't release any major exclusives this year, the Xbox Series X and Xbox Series S remained a great place to play multiplatform hits like *Eden Ring*. Plus, free updates to Microsoft's biggest 2021 game, *Halo Infinite*, have given players more to sink their Spartan teeth into. (Trust us, there are teeth inside those helmets. We think.)

Still, to be fair, 2022 was yet another year in which gaming was defined by the things that didn't happen as much as the things that did. A slew of highly anticipated titles either announced or assumed to be launching by year's end wound up slipping into 2023 instead, like Bethesda's *Starfield* and Nintendo's *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*. On the hardware front, the

biggest news was actually about consoles that came out years ago, with the PS5 and Xbox Series X/S overcoming persistent shortages. We did learn that the next-generation PlayStation VR headset will come to PS5 early next year, but that was about it. Whatever Nintendo is working on in its R&D laboratories remains shrouded in secrecy—and the company has indeed confirmed it's working on *something*.

So, no, 2022 probably won't go down in gaming history as one of the most consequential years ever, even if it did bring some stellar highs. But, as always in the world of interactive entertainment, big things loom over the horizon. In this issue, we're featuring two early 2023 games that look to start the year off right: EA's reimagined *Dead Space* and Deep Silver's *Dead Island 2*.

And let's not forget our cover story, either. This time, we're highlighting the Xbox Series S, the more affordable half of Microsoft's two-console strategy. If you've yet to make the jump to the current generation, you'll want to give this story (and the system) a closer look.

As we move into another year of—fingers crossed—exciting announcements and releases, be sure to keep reading *Walmart Gamecenter*, the magazine that keeps you at the center of all things gaming.

Josh Harmon and Mollie L Patterson  
**EDITORS**

**Walmart Gamecenter**  
winter/january 2023

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## SILENT HILL IS BACK! FOUR GAMES, NEW MOVIE IN THE WORKS

After what felt like an eternity without *Silent Hill* news, publisher Konami delivered the mother-lode, announcing that four games and a new movie are currently in the works.

The biggest and most detailed announcement was that *Layers of Fear* and *The Medium* developer Bloober Team is working on a *Silent Hill 2* remake. Arguably one of the greatest horror games of all time, if not the greatest, *Silent Hill 2* originally launched over 20 years ago, so some things will have to be modernized for the remake. Among those changes are a new over-the-shoulder camera and a reworked combat system.



However, not everything about this *Silent Hill 2* will be different. In fact, artist and creature designer Masahiro Ito and composer Akira Yamaoka from the original development team are working with Bloober Team to ensure that the studio maintains the 2001 classic's overall style.

As for what platforms you'll be able to play it on when it launches, the remake will be a PlayStation 5 console exclusive for a year. The game's visuals already look promising, as Bloober Team is developing it in Unreal Engine 5 and leaning heavily on that platform's Lumen lighting technology to enhance volumetric effects—like fog. It will also take advantage of the DualSense's haptic feedback and adaptive triggers to make players really feel the scares.

The remake is just the beginning, however. Konami also announced three new games and a new movie, though we know less about these projects than *Silent Hill 2*. There's *Silent Hill: Townfall*, for which Konami is collaborating with Annapurna Interactive and BAFTA-winning *Observation* developer No Code. Next is *Silent Hill:*



*Ascension*, a "a live, real-time interactive series, where millions of fans will watch together as the chilling story unfolds" coming from Konami, Genvid, Bad Robot Games, Behavior, and DJ2. Perhaps the most intriguing is *Silent Hill 6*, which isn't set in Silent Hill at all but in 1960s Japan.

Finally, there's the new movie, which will cover the events of *Silent Hill 2*. Called *Return to Silent Hill*, the director of the original 2006 film, Christophe Gans, will literally return to Silent Hill to helm this direct sequel.

The good news is we've got a lot of *Silent Hill* coming in the next few years. The bad news is that we still have to wait. In the meantime, keep your eyes on Walmart.com or your local Walmart store for the return of *Silent Hill*.

### 25 Million

Players that jumped into *Overwatch 2* within its first 10 days of release

### Under 9'

Lady Dimitrescu's height in *Resident Evil Village*'s Mercenaries mode, which is shorter than her just over 9' stature in the main story

### 250,000+

Lines of dialogue in *Starfield* according to director Todd Howard

### 60 FPS

Speed at which programmer SamPerson got *Doom* running inside Windows' Notepad.exe. Yes, for real

### 18

Years Rocksteady Studios co-founders and studio heads Sefton Hill and Jamie Walker spent at the developer before recently departing



# HOW DIGITAL DOWNLOAD WORKS

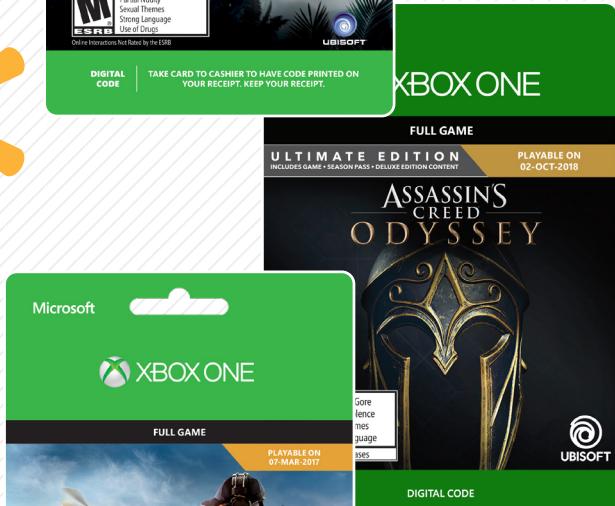
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## Walmart® release calendar

JAN | DEC

**13** CRISIS CORE -FINAL FANTASY VII- REUNION  
SQUARE ENIX / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

**13** ONE PIECE ODYSSEY  
BANDAI NAMCO / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

**20** FIRE EMBLEM ENGAGE  
NINTENDO / SWITCH

**24** FORSPKEN  
SQUARE ENIX / PS5, PC

**27** DEAD SPACE  
EA / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC



FEB

**3** DEAD ISLAND 2  
DEEP SILVER / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

**10** HOGWARTS LEGACY  
WARNER BROS. / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

**16** THEATRHYTHM FINAL BAR LINE  
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**21** LIKE A DRAGON: ISHIN!  
SEGA / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

**24** ATELIER RYZA 3:  
ALCHEMIST OF THE END & THE SECRET KEY  
KOEI TECMO / PS5, SWITCH, PS4, PC

**24** OCTOPATH TRAVELER II  
SQUARE ENIX / PS5, SWITCH, PS4, PC

MAR

**3** WO LONG: FALLEN DYNASTY  
KOEI TECMO / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC



## SONY TAKES PLAYSTATION 5 CONTROLLERS TO THE EDGE

The PlayStation 5 is getting a high-end, customizable first-party controller early next year. The DualSense Edge, as Sony is calling it, will launch globally in late January in a package containing the gamepad and a number of swappable accessories, as well as a carrying case and a braided USB charging cable.

Particular about the shape of your analog sticks? The Edge includes "high dome" and "low dome" options in addition



to the standard version. The analog stick modules on the Edge can also be swapped out entirely, so if you wear one out you're not stuck buying an entirely new controller—just a new stick module.

And if you're interested in adding more buttons, you can deck out the back of the Edge with two additional inputs, with either half-dome or lever-shaped add-ons. Beyond that, the Edge adds two more buttons to the front of the controller, on either side of the headphone jack. One is for quickly adjusting audio settings, while the other allows you to swap between different controller profiles.

Yep, in addition to the physical customization options, the Edge will also support multiple controller profiles via software on the PS5, allowing you to tune things like universal button mapping and stick sensitivity settings.

Be sure to check your local Walmart store or Walmart.com in the coming weeks for details on how to preorder the DualSense Edge.

## EA REVEALS THE FUTURE OF THE SIMS

The next chapter of *The Sims* is officially in development, EA has revealed. While the game may well eventually end up known as *The Sims 5*, for now the publisher is referring to it by the code-name "Project Rene" and stressing that developer Maxis is still very early on in the process.

Project Rene will be "built on a foundation of charming Sims, powerful tools, and meaningful stories," vice president of franchise creative for *The Sims* Lyndsay Pearson said during a recent livestream.



The footage showcased during the stream emphasized two main elements players can expect. The first is deeper customization as you build and decorate a home for your virtual family. Rather than just arranging pre-designed objects, you'll actually be able to alter their colors, patterns, and even shapes, like swapping out the cushions on a sofa or the headboards on a bed. The second element is smoother connectivity and collaboration across platforms, with EA hinting that you and a friend might be able to work on the same save file across mobile, PC, and console, with changes reflected in real time for everyone.

To keep up on the next generations of *The Sims* or check out everything *The Sims 4* currently offers, head over to Walmart.com or your local Walmart store.



## CD PROJEKT RED ANNOUNCES NEW CYBERPUNK, THE WITCHER GAMES, PLUS NEW IP

Even though *Cyberpunk 2077* might have had a slightly rough launch, developer CD Projekt Red isn't about to give up on the franchise. In fact, there's a whole lot more in store for the series according to a recent announcement from the Polish studio.

CDPR revealed in a recent report to investors that, in addition to the upcoming *Phantom Liberty* expansion for 2077, it's already working on a sequel. Codenamed "Orion," the *Cyberpunk* follow-up will take the "franchise further and continue harnessing the potential of this dark future universe," the developer stated.

Given the success of the Netflix anime *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners* and all the effort that CDPR has put into reviving 2077's image, it'll be interesting to see if the team can avoid making the same mistakes it did with the first game. We know that CDPR is building future games in Unreal Engine 5, so a change in the underlying tech might be just what the ripperdoc ordered.

But that's not all that CDPR announced. After all, *Cyberpunk* isn't the only franchise that the developer has up its sleeves. The studio also revealed that it has not one, not two, but three new *Witcher* games in the works.



The first is codenamed "Polaris," and it will mark the beginning of a new *Witcher* trilogy, though it's unclear if it will star Geralt or a new Witcher entirely. According to CDPR, the new trilogy's three games will all launch in a six year span, but there's as of yet no word on when that run will begin.

The second *Witcher* game in the works is a "from the ground up" remake of the original *Witcher* in Unreal Engine 5. That's in development at Fool's Theory, another Polish studio founded by developers who previously worked on *Witcher 2* and *Witcher 3*. The original game in the trilogy never came to consoles, but we expect that will change with the remake.

Last but not least is project "Sirius," which *The Flame and the Flood* developer The Molasses Flood is working on. CDPR acquired The Molasses Flood a little over a year ago, and this appears to be the first game coming out of that deal. We don't know much about it, but we do know that it will offer both multiplayer and a single-player campaign.

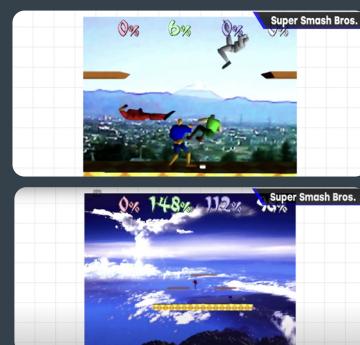
Finally, CDPR also announced a brand-new IP called "Hadar." However, this one is in pre-pre-production, as the studio is still working on the "foundation for this new setting." Knowing CDPR, we either won't see anything about "Hadar" for a while, or we'll get a trailer next month and have to wait a decade for the game to finally launch.

While you wait for CDPR's new games, find all things *Witcher* and *Cyberpunk* on Walmart.com or your local Walmart store.

## SUPER SMASH BROS. CREATOR SHARES THE GAME'S SECRET ORIGINS

Masahiro Sakurai, the creative force behind the *Super Smash Bros.* series of crossover brawlers, has revealed new details about how the franchise got its start.

Interestingly, the original Nintendo 64 *Super Smash Bros.* wasn't always a mash-up of beloved Nintendo characters like Link, Mario, and Kirby. Instead, it got its start as a prototype called *Dragon King: The Fighting Game*. Sakurai revealed footage of this early version, with blocky



humanoid fighters duking it out. Even in this early concept, however, many of the key *Smash Bros.* features were already fleshed out, like four players in a free-for-all match, damage percentages instead of health bars, smash attacks, and stages with multiple platforms to jump between.

More importantly, Sakurai's design philosophy was already in place: He was aiming to make a fighting game with simple inputs that emphasized skill over memorizing lengthy combos. Given the success of *Smash Bros.* and the numerous "platform fighters" spawned in its wake, we think it's fairly safe to say Sakurai's big idea paid off.

To pick up the latest game in the series, *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* for Nintendo Switch, check out your local Walmart store or Walmart.com.

5 to play

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• STATION  
• CHAMBER

• ARCA  
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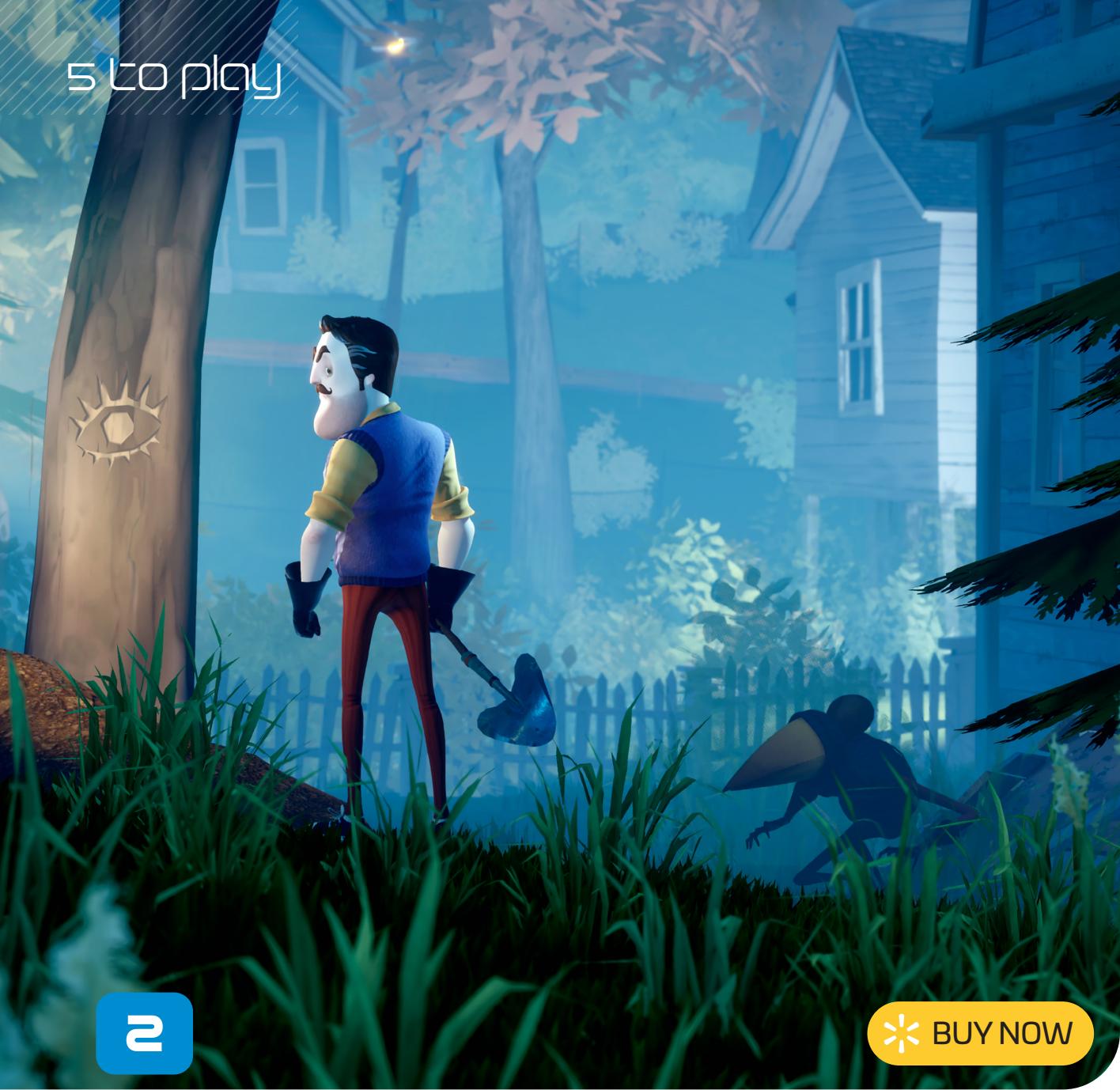
## THE CALLISTO PROTOCOL

PUBLISHER KRAFTON / DEVELOPER STRIKING DISTANCE STUDIOS / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 12.02.2022

*The Callisto Protocol* is a sci-fi survival horror game set on Jupiter's dead moon Callisto. Players take on the role of Jacob Lee, an inmate at Black Iron Prison, who must fight to survive when a mysterious outbreak throws Callisto into chaos, transforming prisoners into terrible creatures called Biophage. It was influenced by games like *Silent Hill* and *Resident Evil*, as well as horror movies like *Event Horizon* and *The Thing*, but I was actually the creator of *Dead Space*, so *Callisto* also shares creative DNA with that game. It's an all-new game, with new characters, new gameplay, and a new story, but we've taken the basic ideas in *Dead Space* and really evolved them. Once people pick up the controller, they'll understand how different the two games are. For instance, there's a deep, strategic combat system [here] that blends shooting and melee combat with a unique gravity weapon called The Grip, or GRP.

GLEN SCHOFIELD, GAME DIRECTOR/CEO, STRIKING DISTANCE STUDIOS

**"It's an all-new game, with new characters, new gameplay, and a new story, but we've taken the basic ideas in *Dead Space* and really evolved them."**



2

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## HELLO NEIGHBOR 2

PUBLISHER TINYBUILD / DEVELOPER EERIE GUEST STUDIOS / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4 / RELEASE DATE 12.09.2022

"Hello Neighbor 2 is the long-awaited sequel to the original *Hello Neighbor*, where your goal was to unearth whatever creepy secrets your Neighbor was hiding in his basement. In this new entry, we really wanted to go beyond that and show more of the town of Raven Brooks, where all the events of both games take place. For *Hello Neighbor 2*, we've re-worked and rethought a lot. Now we have a more cohesive story and gameplay structure, with a primary focus on exploring the many houses of Raven Brooks' residents, and the puzzles and mysteries that lie within. But stay on your guard, as you'll encounter plenty of opposition to reach them. We have also made a big leap forward with art and sound design. And we won't stop at that, with lots of plans for future content updates and new stories we are so excited to share with our community. I think you will love it!"

IVAN OINTSOV, SENIOR GAME DESIGNER, EERIE GUEST STUDIOS

"Now we have a more cohesive story and gameplay structure, with a primary focus on exploring the many houses of Raven Brooks' residents."



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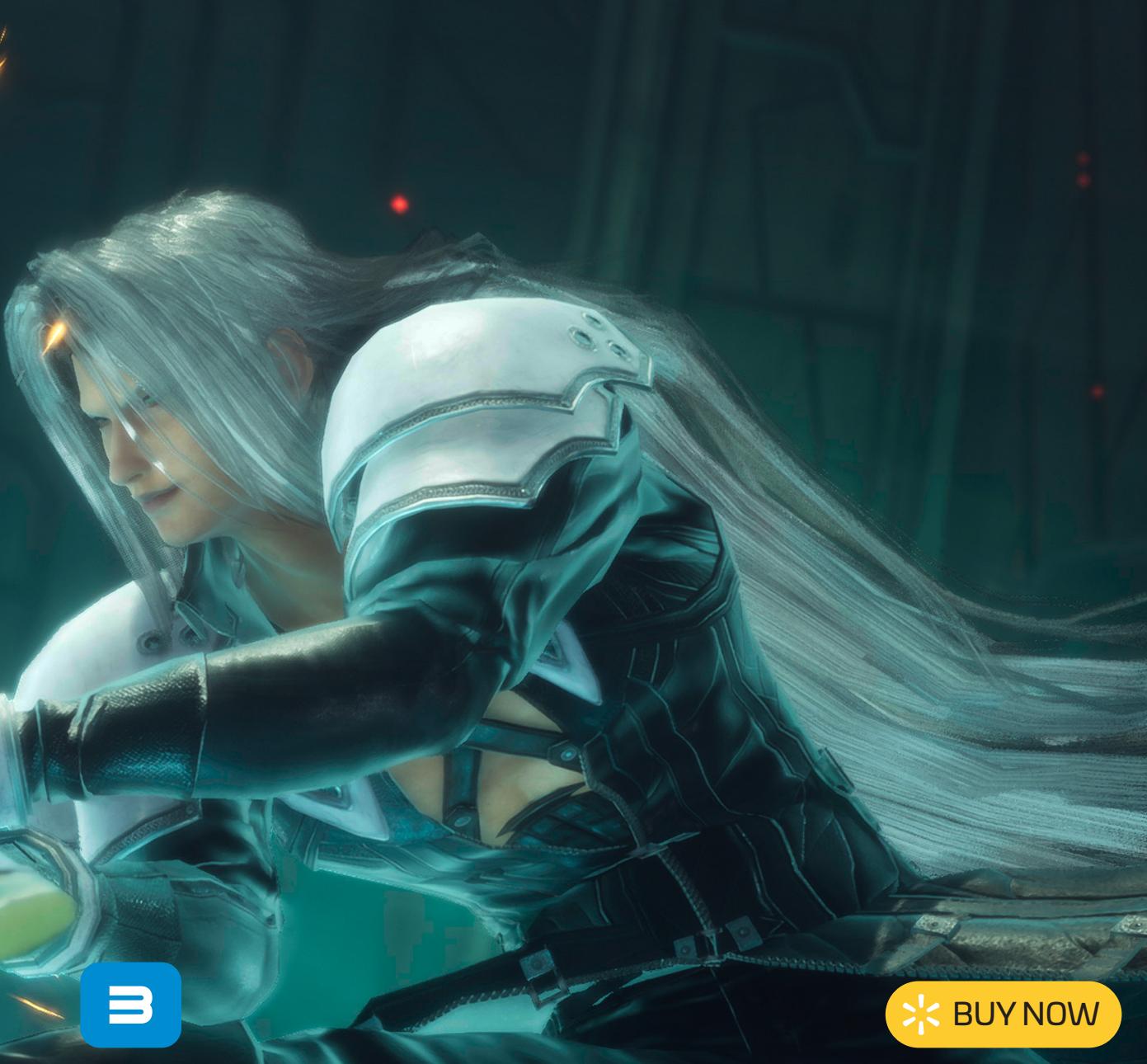
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Microsoft



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## CRISIS CORE -FINAL FANTASY VII- REUNION

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX / DEVELOPER SQUARE ENIX / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH, PC / RELEASE DATE 12.13.2022

Originally released for the PlayStation Portable in 2007, *Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII* was a prequel to 1997's *Final Fantasy VII* that was made to accommodate the unique features of Sony's first handheld. Set seven years before *FFVII*, the game followed Zack Fair, an agent of SOLDIER who's ordered to track down a missing operative named Genesis Rhapsodos, only to discover a much darker secret. For *Reunion*, Square Enix gives this action-packed role-playing game a much-needed overhaul, with the visuals upgraded to high definition with reworked 3D character models. It's also modernized both the combat system and controls. As well, the game boasts a newly arranged soundtrack, as well as full voice cast that has many of the actors from *Final Fantasy VII Remake* reprising their roles, including *Superman & Lois*'s Tyler Hoechlin as Sephiroth and *Teen Wolf*'s Cody Christian as Cloud Strife.

For *Reunion*,  
Square Enix gives  
this action-packed  
role-playing game  
a much-needed  
overhaul.



4

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## GUNGRAVE G.O.R.E.

PUBLISHER PRIME MATTER / DEVELOPER IGGYMOB CO. LTD / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 11.22.2022

"Like the original *Gungrave*, *Gungrave G.O.R.E.* is a stylish, over-the-top, third-person action game in which you have an unlimited ammo system and no reloading. Armed, as always, with his twin guns and a coffin that holds the brain of a woman he loved, Grave begins his personal mission to eradicate the Raven Clan, an organization that distributes a drug called SEED. For this installment, we've added a melee attack to provide additional combat mechanics, as well as an experience system for users to try different skills, which provides multiple reasons to replay the adventure. But the best new thing is Storm Barrage. Just like the name implies, it sends bullets everywhere, like a storm. Storm Barrage is very useful against multiple enemies. However, it also takes some of your stamina, so you have to be strategic about it."

BOBBY PARK, PROJECT MANAGER, IGGYMOB CO. LTD

"For this installment, we've added a melee attack to provide additional combat mechanics, as well as an experience system for users to try different skills."

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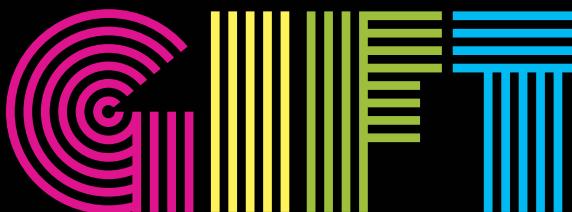
## MARVEL'S MIDNIGHT SUNS

PUBLISHER 2K GAMES / DEVELOPER FIRAXIS GAMES / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, PC / RELEASE DATE 12.02.2022

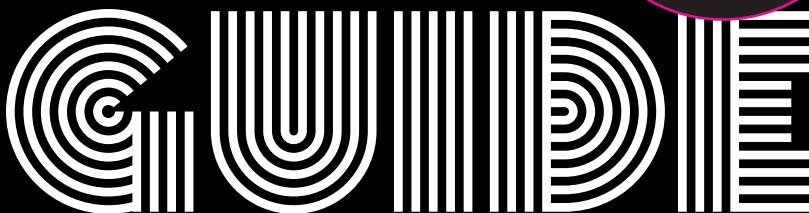
"Loosely inspired by the '90s comic *Rise of the Midnight Sons*, *Marvel's Midnight Suns* has Hydra resurrecting Lilith, Mother of Demons, who quickly bends Hydra to her will. She wants to resurrect her master, Chthon, the Elder God of Chaos, and bring about the prophecy of the Midnight Sun. Because Lilith is supernatural, the Avengers enlist the help of heroes who have experience with mystical threats: Ghost Rider, Magik, Blade, and Nico Minoru. As for the gameplay, *Midnight Suns* is a tactical role-playing game in which you play as The Hunter, an original (and customizable) hero we designed with Marvel. Combat is tactical and turn-based, but comes with a twist: Every hero ability is represented as a card, and every hero features a unique set of abilities. You also take three heroes into combat, where their abilities are shuffled together and then dealt to you as a hand at the start of each turn."

 JOE WEINHOFFER, LEAD DESIGNER, FIRAXIS GAMES

*"Midnight Suns is a tactical role-playing game in which you play as The Hunter, an original (and customizable) hero we designed with Marvel."*



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## HORI NINTENDO SWITCH AND NINTENDO SWITCH OLED SPLIT PAD COMPACT

Hori's Split Pad Pro Joy-Con replacement controllers have become a popular accessory among Nintendo Switch fans, as they improve control accuracy and accessibility when playing the system in handheld mode—especially for those with larger hands. Now, with the Split Pad Compact, Hori has taken that previous hardware and redesigned it to look more in line with the Switch's design. While their appearance has changed, both units of the Split Pad Compact still feature turbo functionality, programmable rear buttons, and back grips, while the left section once again has a D-pad for those who love classic gaming on the go.



### PDP XBOX SERIES X/S + PC BLACK AFTERGLOW WAVE CONTROLLER

While plenty of third-party controllers allow you to customize your analog sticks, buttons, or triggers, the Afterglow Wave Wired Controller for Xbox Series X/S and PC from PDP focuses on something different: style. With eight different LED zones that are adjustable in color, brightness, animation speed, and more, you can give the controller a glow that's as unique as you are. Don't worry though, the Afterglow Wave is no slouch when it comes time to get in the game, as it features programmable back buttons, button remapping, adjustable dead zones for the analog sticks, and built-in audio controls.



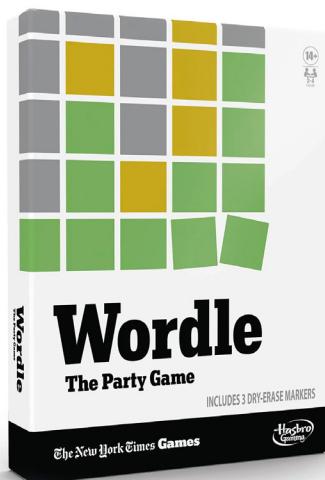
### THRUSTMASTER T248 RACING WHEEL AND T3PM PEDAL SET

If you're the type who takes racing games seriously, then the Thrustmaster T248 Racing Wheel and T3PM Pedal Set is for you. Fully compatible with PlayStation 5, PlayStation 4, and PC, the T248 racing wheel features three types of force feedback, a next-gen hybrid drive system to offer a smoother steering experience, 25 action buttons for a wide array of control customization, magnetic paddle shifters, and a built-in dashboard display that can be swapped between 20 different types of information (such as telemetry details). Combined with the T3PM magnetic pedal set, get ready for a next-gen racing experience.

## XGIMI HORIZON PRO PROJECTOR

Most of our picks in this gift guide are meant to fit within the average budget, but we also wanted to include something that'd be more of a dream gift for the holidays. For that, we picked the XGIMI Horizon Pro, a device perfect for your home theater no matter if you're looking to watch hit movies and TV shows or play the latest and greatest games. Visually, the projector supports 4K HDR10 at a peak brightness of 2,200 lumens, and it can pump out its own audio thanks to two 8 watt, 1.77" full-range Harman Kardon speakers. The Horizon Pro also comes ready to stream thanks to Android TV being built in, or you can stream videos directly from your iOS or Android smartphone.





## WORDLE THE PARTY GAME

If you're measuring by total impact on pop culture, the biggest gaming hit of the year was undoubtedly *Wordle*, the simple word guessing game that got so popular so fast it was gobbled up by the *New York Times*. If you've spent the last few months staring at yellow and green squares, then you'll definitely want to give this board game adaptation a shot. One player writes down a secret word, while the others try to be the one to figure it out in as few guesses as possible—giving a competitive twist to the original game. Just don't choose "parer" as your word unless you want to ruin the party.

## MCFARLANE TOYS GOTHAM KNIGHTS NIGHTWING ACTION FIGURE

This year's *Gotham Knights* follows four of Batman's proteges as they step up in the wake of the Dark Knight's death, and McFarlane has given them all the action figure treatment. But space is at a premium here, so we had to pick just one to include. We went with Nightwing, aka Dick Grayson, aka the OG Robin. No offense to Batgirl or Tim "Robin Number Three" Drake. (Some offense to Red Hood, though.) The figure features 22 moving parts to help with striking heroic poses, and it comes with two of Nightwing's escrima sticks, a base, and a collectible art card.

## LEGO SUPER MARIO ADVENTURES WITH PEACH STARTER COURSE

The collaboration between LEGO and Nintendo on *Super Mario Bros.*—inspired sets has been going strong for a few years, and now it's Princess Peach's turn to take the spotlight with her own starter course. Like Mario and Luigi before her, LEGO Peach practically comes alive with a built-in LED face and speaker, and Bluetooth capabilities allow her to connect with other figures and an official app for added interactivity. Can she defeat Koopalings Lemmy and reach the flag at the end of the course? It's up to you to build this set for yourself and find out.



## ANIMAL CROSSING LEAF PLUSH

For fans of Nintendo's cozy village life simulator *Animal Crossing*, this plush is a great way to celebrate the series. It's designed to look like the leaf icon used when you drop an item out of your inventory, so it's instantly recognizable for anyone who's played the game, but also subtle enough to blend into a room if you're not a big fan of conspicuous gaming merch. Plus, at 6 inches, it's the perfect size to throw around and pretend you're redecorating your house, at a teensy fraction of the cost of actually redecorating your house. Tom Nook approved!





# PlayStation®



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## PULSE 3D™ Wireless Headset

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## DualSense™ Wireless Controllers

Discover a deeper gaming experience with the innovative new PS5™ controllers. These DualSense™ Wireless Controllers offer immersive haptic feedback\*, dynamic adaptive\* triggers and a built in microphone, all integrated into an iconic design.



## NERF FORTNITE RL BLASTER

Listen, we hear you. If you're looking for gift ideas for someone else right now, you're probably thinking, is this a good idea? Do I really want to get a Nerf rocket launcher based on the classic *Fortnite* weapon for my friend or child or significant other? Wouldn't that just be a one-way ticket to them popping me in the back of the head with a big foam rocket, and then screaming "Victory Royale!" and doing that weird Orange Justice dance? And you know what? You might be right, but there's an easy solution: Buy one for yourself, too, and shoot back.

## PAC-MAN BOARD GAME

One of the most iconic video games of all time is back in tabletop form. In this board game adaptation of the Namco arcade classic, one player takes on the role of Pac-Man in an attempt to gobble up all the dots in the maze, while the other players team up as the ghosts—Inky, Blinky, Pinky, and Clyde—to try to ensure a speedy game over. And just like back in the days when cabinets munched your quarters, everyone takes turns competing for the highest score as Pac-Man. If you're buying for someone whose board game night needs a bit of retro gaming flair, this is a great pick.



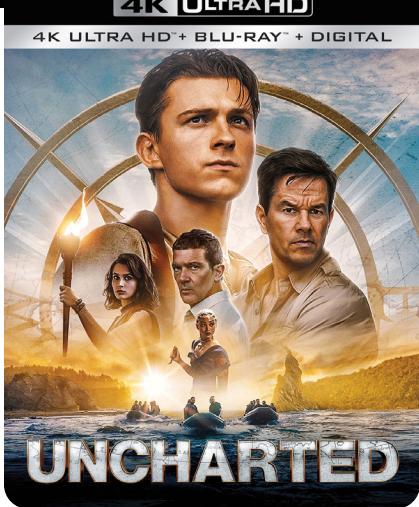
## MEGA POKÉMON CONSTRUCTION SETS

MEGA Pokémon Construction Sets offer a bit of brick-building fun in a small and affordable package. Each set comes with all the pieces you need to assemble your chosen 'mon, as well as a Poké Ball to store them in or perch them atop for display. With several different options available—and that obviously includes the OG starters: Charmander, Squirtle, Bulbasaur, and Pikachu—you won't quite be able to catch 'em all, but you can pick your favorite or build a nice little collection. Still, no matter what anyone else may tell you, Magikarp is definitely the best one. Just look at it!

## HANDHELD TETRIS MINI

The Arcade Classics Handheld *Tetris* Mini lets you play the classic block-dropping puzzle game anytime and anywhere you want. Stacking up at just under 6 inches tall, this miniaturized arcade cabinet includes a small four-directional joystick and three buttons—everything you need to play—as well as an all-important speaker so you can listen to the game's now-legendary Russian folk music soundtrack while you pile up those tetrominoies. (Of course, you can always mute it if you want.) The *Tetris* Mini can even track high scores, just like a real arcade cabinet. And in a nice change of pace, batteries actually are included.





## UNCHARTED

It only took a little over a decade, but the *Uncharted* movie—based on the other fan-favorite action-adventure series from *The Last of Us* studio Naughty Dog—finally arrived in 2022, giving viewers a new take on the wild world of Nathan Drake (played by Spider-Man himself, Tom Holland). When a treasure hunter named Victor “Sully” Sullivan (Mark Wahlberg), who previously worked with Nathan’s long-lost brother, comes asking for his help, the young Drake sets out on the adventure of a lifetime to find the treasure of Magellan’s crew. Inspired by the games, *Uncharted* also features familiar characters like Chloe Frazier (Sophia Ali) and new villains like Santiago Moncada (Antonio Banderas).

## SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2

Sonic is back for another battle against his archnemesis—with a little help from some familiar faces. Following his fight against Dr. Robotnik (Jim Carrey) at the end of the first movie, Sonic the Hedgehog (Ben Schwarz) is settling into his new life in Green Hills, Montana. But when Robotnik escapes from his mushroom planet prison thanks to a red echidna named Knuckles (Idris Elba) with his sights set on the Master Emerald, Sonic has to learn to rely on new friends like Tails to become a hero. This family-friendly romp featuring some of the most iconic video game characters of all time makes a great gift for any gamer.



## RESIDENT EVIL: WELCOME TO RACCOON CITY

The original *Resident Evil* films starring Milla Jovovich might have strayed pretty far from the characters and situations of the video game series, but *Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City* looks to make up for lost time by combining the events of the first two games into one rip-roaring cinematic reboot. Iconic characters like Claire and Chris Redfield, Leon S. Kennedy, and Jill Valentine have to survive a zombie apocalypse in Raccoon City’s police station and while searching for a lost tactical team in Spencer Mansion. Between *Welcome to Raccoon City* and the recent game remakes of *Resident Evil 2* and *3*, now is a great time to be a fan of these classic video game characters.



## MORTAL KOMBAT LEGENDS: SNOW BLIND

Earthrealm is in bad shape after its battle with Outworld, as roving bands of revenants attack the remaining villages and communities. But when Kano declares himself king of the wasteland with the help of a group of followers known collectively as the Black Dragon, it’s down to an upstart young warrior named Kenshi and a mysteri-

ous farmer known as Kuai Liang to stop him. Fans of the bloody and brutal world of the *Mortal Kombat* franchise will find a lot to like in *Snow Blind*, which iterates on iconic characters like Sub-Zero, Scorpion, Shang Tsung, and Kano in a dark and interesting way. Do note: Though it’s animated, this one’s not for youngsters.



# HOT HARDWARE & ACCESSORIES

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## DUALSENSE™ WIRELESS CONTROLLER GREY CAMOUFLAGE

Infused with unique micro patterns of the iconic PlayStation Shapes, the stylish DualSense™ Grey Camouflage wireless controller brings a fresh urban aesthetic into play. DualSense™ wireless controller offers immersive haptic feedback, dynamic adaptive triggers and a built-in microphone, all integrated into an iconic comfortable design.



## DUALSENSE™ WIRELESS CONTROLLER MIDNIGHT BLACK

Ignite your gaming nights on your PS5™ console with the DualSense™ Midnight Black wireless controller. Part of a new line-up of galaxy-themed colors, this sleek design takes inspiration from how we view the wonders of space through the night sky, with subtle shades of black and light grey detailing.



## RIG 400HX

Officially licensed for Xbox, the 400HX features 40mm high sensitivity drivers that deliver every detail of the soundscape. Tuned acoustics provide low frequency emphasis without the distortion. Signature small, medium and large size adjustments allow you to find the perfect fit every time with optimal clamping force. Durable design with a virtually unbreakable headband and earcups designed to separate from the headband when force is applied to prevent breakage. Microphone is removable for either solo sessions or mobile gaming. Available in Urban Camo that is exclusive to Walmart.



## RIG 400HS

Play better for longer with the uncompromising performance of RIG 400HS, designed for PlayStation® 4 and PlayStation® 5. Noise-isolating earcups encompass precision tuned 40MM drivers that deliver rich bass and accurate highs. An ultralight flexible and durable headband is coupled with fabric-covered ear cushions that provide enduring comfort. Signature small, medium and large size adjustments allow you to find the perfect fit every time with optimal clamping force. Microphone is removable for either solo sessions or mobile gaming. Available in Artic Camo that is exclusive to Walmart.



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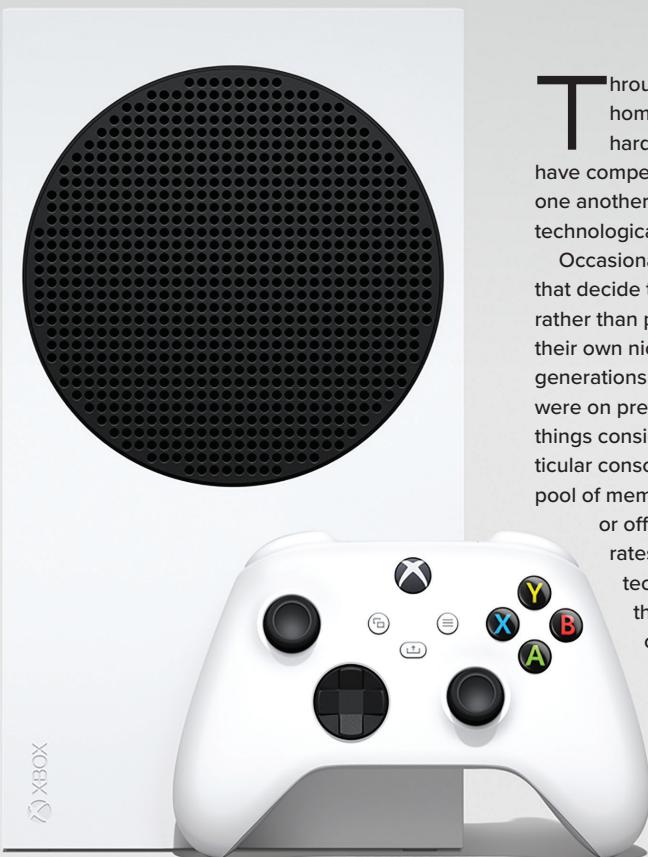


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# SAY HELLO (AGAIN) TO THE XBOX SERIES

FOR EVERYONE FROM CASUAL GAMERS TO HARDCORE PLAYERS ON THE GO, MICROSOFT'S SURPRISING LITTLE SYSTEM HAS TURNED INTO A POWERHOUSE

BY MOLLIE L PATTERSON



Throughout the history of home video game consoles, hardware manufacturers have competed directly with one another in fierce battles for technological supremacy. Occasionally you have consoles that decide to embrace novelty rather than power to try to carve out their own niches, but most hardware generations have seen systems that were on pretty equal footing, all things considered. Sure, one particular console might have a larger pool of memory, a bit more power,

or offer slightly higher frame rates and resolutions, but as technology has advanced, the differences between consoles has become

more about numbers on paper versus vastly divergent experiences when gaming.

As we approached the current generation, everything seemed to be going as expected. Microsoft revealed the Xbox Series X, an amazing new system that was capable of running games its predecessor, the Xbox One, could never have dreamed of. Soon after, Sony announced the PlayStation 5, the latest in the company's line of consoles that promised to run rings around the PlayStation 4. The stage was set, and two new titans would take up arms to fight in the console wars.

And then, Microsoft shocked the world with the reveal of a second new console: the Xbox Series S.

**Microsoft shocked the world with the reveal of a second new console: the Xbox Series S.**



**"We wanted to have a product for those gamers right from the start with Xbox Series S in addition to the more premium experience available with Xbox Series X."**

**BREE ADAMS, SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER AT XBOX**

The “smallest Xbox ever” would play all of the same games as the Xbox Series X, giving players experiences that were never before possible, but it’d do all of that while targeting a wider audience. For the first time since the earliest video game consoles hit the market, a system would be available in two totally different configurations in terms of internal hardware right from launch—and that one decision by Microsoft and the Xbox team just may have changed gaming forever.

“In the past, consoles often did not become an affordable option for many users until later into the generation,” explained Bree Adams, senior marketing manager at Xbox. “This time around, we wanted to have a product for those gamers right from the start with Xbox Series S in addi-

tion to the more premium experience available with Xbox Series X.”

Throughout the history of gaming consoles, going for the cheaper option has often meant getting a lesser experience. In the earlier days, cost-cutting measures resulted in products like the redesigned “top loader” NES that had lower-quality video output, or the Genesis 2 and its noticeable reduction in audio clarity. In more modern times, previously existing functions like hardware features, backward compatibility, and accessory support are some of the things that have been removed to lower production costs.

It’s not surprising that some might equate “more affordable” with “lower quality” when it comes to gaming hardware, but the past two years have shown that to absolutely not

be the case with the Xbox Series S. Yes, it has limitations, most notably its focus on resolutions up to 1440p rather than 4K and its smaller internal storage compared to the Xbox Series X. If we’re honest about those limitations, though, then we should be equally honest about the console’s strengths—and it’s become clear that there are many.

So, over the next four pages, let’s talk about some of the ways the Xbox Series S has grown to become a powerful and versatile member of the new generation of gaming—along with some of the people who can most benefit from all it has to offer.



## THE NEXT-GEN CURIOUS

When it comes to the hardest of the hardcore, gamers want the best, most powerful hardware they can get—and those gamers are going for the Xbox Series X. However, there are a lot more people out there who have interest in playing the latest and greatest releases without wanting to make as large of an investment to do so.

That's where the Xbox Series S comes in. For a much lower initial price tag, players can now access everything the new generation has to offer without major compromises to their experience. And, from there, they also have more choice in how they take that experience to the next level.

For some, the Xbox Series S may be all they'll ever need, and whatever money they would have spent on upgrading their hardware can go instead to new games or subscribing to Xbox Game Pass. For others, the system can serve as a gateway to the Xbox Series X without blindly jumping into the higher-priced console.

Beyond everything else, the biggest strength of the Xbox Series S is clear: It's a lower-priced option for participating in a new era of consoles far sooner than some consumers might otherwise be able to. And, in an unexpected twist, it's also offered that ability thanks to being the most widely available new-gen hardware during worldwide technology short-

**"Xbox Series S is for anyone who wants a next generation gaming experience at a great value, prioritizes framerate over 4K display, and prefers their games in a digital format."**

***BREE ADAMS, SENIOR MARKETING  
MANAGER AT XBOX***

ages. As electronic devices across the industry have faced manufacturing issues, Microsoft's design of the Series S has meant it's been easier to produce with consistency.

The thing is, bringing more players to new hardware isn't just about those players—it's also about game developers. The more people who





In an era when so many of us have smartphones full of downloaded apps, quick access to a digital library of titles can sometimes be the best solution.

own a particular system, the more potential customers a new title will have. So, while producing two different tiers of Xbox Series hardware was certainly a risky bet, it was one made with multiple groups in mind.

"Two consoles at launch was definitely ambitious," Adams agreed. "The best news for our game creators was we knew that having a lower price console at launch that could run Generation 9 games well would help them (and us) make gaming more accessible to even more gamers around the world."

Making gaming more accessible is especially important for the biggest group of potential players: casual gamers. While some of us stress over teraflops and memory bandwidth, the majority of players just want something to play video games on. And, while plenty of us have upgraded to breathtaking 4K televisions, there are

still a large number of people happily gaming away on the small screen on their desk or the 1080p television in the living room.

"Xbox Series S is for anyone who wants a next generation gaming experience at a great value, prioritizes framerate over 4K display, and prefers their games in a digital format," said Adams.

That last point is actually an important one when talking about more casual gamers. Sure, some love owning shelves full of physical games, but in an era when so many of us have smartphones full of downloaded apps, quick access to a digital library of titles can sometimes be the best solution. And, these days, it's easier than ever to get games digitally, from using the Microsoft Store right on the Series S itself, to picking up digital download cards during a shopping trip to Walmart.



## THE AESTHETICIST

In thinking about what casual gamers value in a gaming console, there are plenty of obvious factors, such as price, selection of games, and ease of use. Often, though, one factor in particular goes overlooked: the system's physical design.

How much room will this piece of hardware take up in my home? How well will it fit in with the environment it's going into? How noticeable will it be in my daily life? While those might seem like silly questions to some, they're important to others, and those kinds of concerns were part of the design process for the Xbox Series S.

"What is really cool about this form factor is that it will fit in more places in customers' homes," explained Chris Kujawski, principal designer at Xbox. "We design our products to be long lasting, and we want the industrial design to last as well. Whether customers choose to celebrate the console or tuck it away due to its small size, our goal is to provide them with a product that they are happy living with and using for years."



These days, in addition to buying games either physically or digitally, it's impossible to talk about Xbox without bringing up Game Pass, the platform's gaming subscription service that has completely shaken up the industry.

"When gamers pair their Xbox Series S with our gaming subscription Xbox Game Pass, they'll get access to hundreds of high quality games, including Day One releases from Xbox Game Studios," said Adams. "Game Pass is a great way to try out new titles and genres for solo adventurers, and for those who love to play games with friends."

Now, of course, Game Pass is also available on the Xbox Series X, but it becomes an especially powerful option for families when paired with an Xbox Series S. As children, many of us only received a small handful of new games a year, as that was all our families could afford. Now, with the lower-priced Series S and a subscription to Game Pass, your household can have access to hundreds of games to play every month. And, even better, all members of the family are sure to be able to find something to play, meaning the adults can have just as much fun with that Series S sitting in the family room as their kids do.



**"When gamers pair their Xbox Series S with our gaming subscription Xbox Game Pass, they'll get access to hundreds of high quality games, including Day One releases from Xbox Game Studios."**

**BREE ADAMS, SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER AT XBOX**

## THE FAMILY

The Xbox Series S can be the perfect console for a family looking to enjoy some modern gaming, but it can also be a perfect second console for your family. Or, perhaps even third.

For the first time, families have a cheaper option for expanding the gaming possibilities in their homes without going back to older-generation hardware or waiting for price drops that may be years to come. If that Xbox Series X you picked up is proving a little too popular, you can always add a Series S to a playroom or bedroom. Have children who aren't good at sharing? Picking up two systems won't cost you all that much more than it would be to get one Series X. And, because Xbox accounts can be active on multiple consoles, you can share your purchased digital games across the different systems in your home.

As well, the Xbox Series S makes it cheaper and easier to bring the Xbox ecosystem into the family of consoles you already own. If you or your children have had little experience with Xbox in the past, now's the perfect chance to find out everything the platform has to offer.

## THE TRAVELER

We here at *Walmart Gamecenter* are no strangers to traveling for work, having made many trips around the United States (and around the globe) in the name of covering video games. Previously, if we wanted to spend some of our down time during those trips gaming, the solution was usually either a handheld or a laptop.

Now, fans are flush with great options for gaming on the go. While it certainly isn't the only easily portable piece of gaming hardware on the market, the Xbox Series S carries with it the benefit of offering the console experience in a package you can tuck away in a carry-on suitcase or even a backpack.

The strength of the Series S's smaller design isn't just taking it on trips, however. The system is also a great option for local get-togethers, whether it be for intense *Halo* multiplayer sessions or simply bringing it to the home of a friend or family member who doesn't have their own Xbox.

And, if you're *really* ambitious, some third-party manufacturers are even making portable displays specifically for the Xbox Series S—meaning the only limit to where you can game is the availability of somewhere to plug in a power cord.

The final strength of the Xbox Series S we'd like to point out is one of the most surprising—and interesting—factors that has revealed itself over the past few years: the console's portability.

At some point, every console is portable, even the mighty NeoGeo. However, the design of the Xbox Series S has made it incredibly easy to pick up and take with you, no matter if you're moving it to another room or another country. Because of that, the system has become popular in the days since it launched as a way to take your gaming with you wherever you go.

"We've heard from customers that it's pretty common to move a game console between rooms in a house, or between houses," Xbox principal designer Chris Kujawski told us. "Be-

ing able to easily fit [the Xbox Series S] in a bag and take it with you is another bonus to this really compact form factor."

No matter if you easily fit into one of the categories we've featured here, or your wants and needs as a gamer are of a different nature, there's no better time to check out the Xbox Series S than right now. What started out as a risky and potentially underpowered next-gen console has grown into a bold new option for gaming that's rife with benefits—ones that countless players have already discovered.

"Xbox Series S has been well received by gamers around the world," said Adams. "We have millions of gamers playing on our Series X|S consoles, and we look forward to welcoming millions more in the years to come." 

**"Being able to easily fit [the Xbox Series S] in a bag and take it with you is another bonus to this really compact form factor."**

*CHRIS KUJAWSKI, XBOX PRINCIPAL DESIGNER*



preview

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# DEAD SPACE

DEAD SPACE, REANIMATED

BY MICHAEL GOROFF

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER

ELECTRONIC ARTS

DEVELOPER

MOTIVE STUDIO

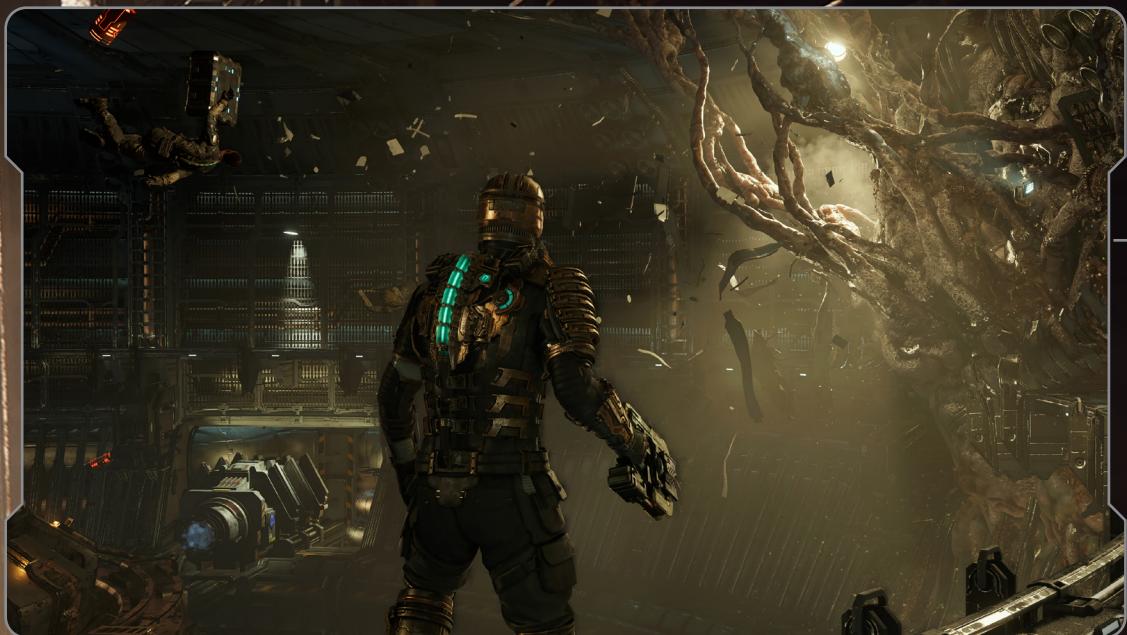
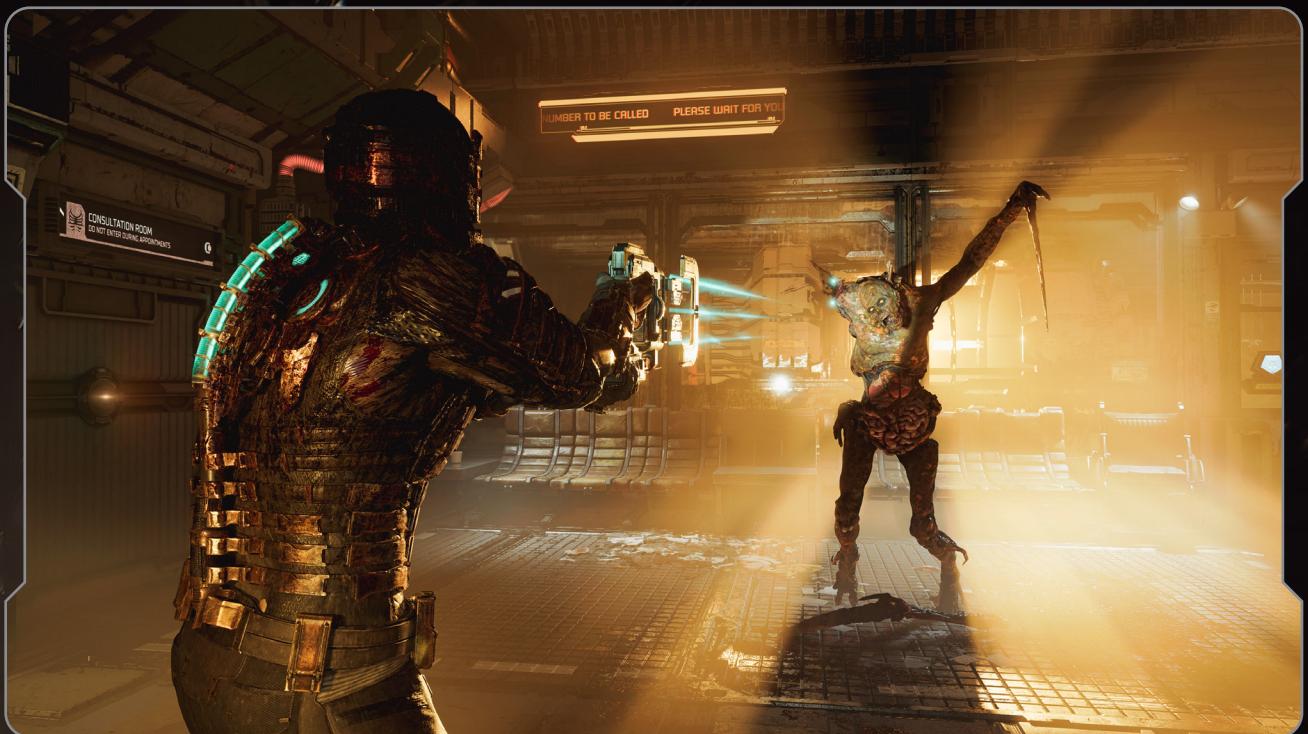
PLATFORMS

XBOX SERIES X/S,

PS5, PC

RELEASE DATE

01.27.2023



Thanks to a lighting overhaul, the *Ishimura* is spookier and more atmospheric than ever before.

If we've learned anything over the last few years, it's that remakes of older games can be just as good—and sometimes even better—than the originals. That's especially true of horror games, which can use new tech and modern gameplay advances to enhance the immersive terror they mean to convey. (Look no further than 2019's *Resident Evil 2* for evidence of that.)

Just on the (event) horizon is another classic horror title getting the remake treatment: Electronic Arts' sci-fi horror mashup, *Dead Space*, with *Star Wars Squadrons* developer Motive Studio taking on the project.

Fifteen years after the original launched, the *Dead Space* remake will bring players back to where it all started. After receiving a distress signal from the USG *Ishimura* mining

**Fifteen years after the original launched, the *Dead Space* remake will bring players back to where it all started.**



## SOUND ON

Developer Motive Studio isn't limiting the idea of a "remake" to just the enhanced visuals, a redesigned *Ishimura*, and new gameplay elements in *Dead Space*. Audio will also play a huge role in making it feel like a more modern gaming experience.

Audio occlusion will go a long way toward making the *Ishimura*—and its undead inhabitants—feel more alive. Where sounds are coming from and how they traveled to you will directly impact your experience. Sound can bounce off walls and travel through elements like glass, dynamically changing how you hear something.

That's not the only way that Motive will make the game's audio more dynamic, either. The studio's new A.L.I.V.E. system will amp up the drama by changing the sounds that player character Isaac Clarke makes depending on his emotional state. If he's just walking down a corridor, his breathing and speech should sound pretty normal. But if he's being chased by a Necromorph, his breathing will increase and his voice will sound more panicked.

ship, Isaac Clarke and the rest of the USG *Kellion*'s crew set out to discover what happened, only to find horrors they couldn't possibly have imagined. Well, assuming they couldn't have imagined alien-mutant-zombie monsters called Necromorphs, that is.

While the main story beats will remain the same in the remake, even the most hardcore fans will have good reasons to revisit *Dead Space*'s twisted tale. For one, protagonist Isaac will actually speak while aboard the *Ishimura*, something he never did

in the original game. To deliver his newly written lines, Motive tapped Gunner Wright, the same actor that played Isaac in the sequels. Fans of the series will also notice new connections to and foreshadowing of events that happened later in the series, making sure that the remake will make the story fit more snugly into the canon.

The *Ishimura* itself will also see some significant changes, beyond just looking way better in 4K on Xbox Series X and PlayStation 5. Not only are Motive's level designers

A modern visual overhaul certainly hasn't made the Necromorphs any easier on the eyes.





**While the main story beats will remain the same in the remake, even the most hardcore fans will have good reasons to revisit *Dead Space*'s twisted tale.**

rebuilding a lot of the ship's locations from scratch, but the *Ishimura* will be completely interconnected this time around. That means no more getting on a tram for the obligatory load to enter a new area. In fact, *Dead Space* won't have any loading screens at all—unless the player dies, which is, in all honesty, very likely.

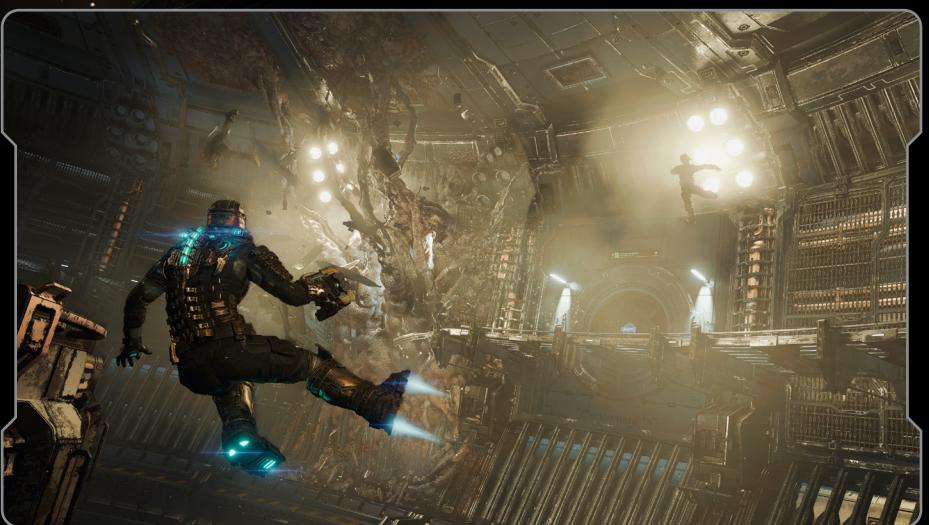
New gameplay elements will also keep the experience fresh. Players will have more options for how to approach certain situations—for example, is it more important to keep



the lights on, or would you rather have life support continually pumping oxygen into the room? The “zero G” moments from the sequels will also find their way into the remake, and AI will dynamically change how locations look and which Necromorphs spawn when you have to revisit them.

## The “zero G” moments from the sequels will also find their way into the remake, and AI will dynamically change how locations look.

Whether you’re new to the series or experiencing *Dead Space* for the millionth time, the remake promises to offer an experience that feels original. And hopefully, you won’t have to experience too many loading screens. ©





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preview

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# DEAD ISLAND

IT'S ALIVE

BY JOSH HARMON

Usually, when you don't see anything about a game for, oh, eight years, it's pretty safe to assume it's dead. But zombies are nothing if not persistent when it comes to cheating death, and *Dead Island* 2 seems to have inherited that trait from its hordes of brain-craving baddies.

That's right: After switching developers multiple times and spending the better part of a decade in development limbo, the first-person zombie action RPG is finally gearing

up for release. And from everything we've seen, it won't be shambling into stores, either—it'll be striding in very much alive and well.

The game's latest—and, barring a zombie-apocalypse-level catastrophe, last—developer is Dambuster Studios, and the British team has reimaged some of the ideas from the in-development version promoted in trailers and demos in 2014 into something altogether different. Rather than being set on separate maps spanning the whole of California,

*Dead Island* 2 will instead take place entirely in a zombified version of Los Angeles, with iconic sights from around the city recreated for the game (see sidebar for more info). The good news is there'll be much less traffic than in real life. The bad news is, well, everything else.

You play as one of six survivors, all of whom have discovered they're immune to the zombie virus. Each has their own backstory, personality, and specialties, but you'll also have plenty of freedom to customize how

## FACT FILE

### PUBLISHER

DEEP SILVER

### DEVELOPER

DAMBUSTER STUDIOS

### PLATFORMS

XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5,

XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

### RELEASE DATE

02.03.23



Rather than being set on separate maps spanning the whole of California, *Dead Island 2* will instead take place entirely in a zombified version of Los Angeles.



## TO DIE AND LIVE IN LA

Let's get one thing out of the way: Los Angeles isn't an island. But in the world of *Dead Island 2*, it at least sort of figuratively counts. After an outbreak starts turning Angelenos into (even bigger) zombies, the government quarantines the entire region—no one in or out.

As one of the survivors trapped inside, you'll be able to venture to several districts inspired by real world neighborhoods, recreated with an eye for both accuracy and parody. So far, we've seen at least three different areas. First, there's the Hollywood Hills, full of movie star mansions and swimming pools. Then there's Beverly Hills, complete with gaudy statues and a big, pink hotel. Finally, trailers have prominently featured the Venice Beach Boardwalk, with tourist-trap stalls and oceanfront parks. (We've also seen the Santa Monica Pier, but it's as of yet unclear whether it'll share a district with Venice or be its own separate area).

In addition to familiar landmarks, each region of *Dead Island 2*'s LA will be filled with its own zombie variants designed to reflect the character of the neighborhood. Yes, that means Venice will be full of musclebound goons—only a bit more braindead than the ones you'll find in real life.





## Some of the images we've seen are definitely not fit to print in a family friendly magazine. We're not even sure we should *describe* them.

they play thanks to the new skill system, which lets you instantly respect to try out whatever build catches your eye. In general, however, combat will gear toward melee—as ammo for ranged weapons will be fairly limited, you'll want to save it for special occasions.

No matter what you fight with, you can count on the combat in *Dead Island 2* being particularly brutal. Some of the images we've seen are definitely not fit to print in a family friendly magazine. We're not even

sure we should *describe* them. Suffice it to say, a great deal of technological know-how has gone into crafting some, uh, let's say *memorable* visuals as you carve, punch, burn, and bludgeon your way across the City of Angels.

Like previous *Dead Island* games, this new entry will feature special zombies that will be even tougher to take down, so you'll want to make sure you're collecting new loot to have the best chance at survival. If you want a leg up against the un-

dead, or just some company, you can also invite two of your friends along for three-player co-op.

Given the tumultuous history of *Dead Island 2*, it's a pleasant surprise to see this revived version of the game finally coming together. With the launch set for early next year, the big remaining question is whether the long wait will prove worth it in the end. But early signs are promising, and if we've learned anything over the past eight years, it's this: Never count *Dead Island 2* out. G

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# GOD OF WAR RAGNARÖK

AN EPIC CONCLUSION

BY JOSH HARMON

If you played 2018's *God of War*, there's no doubt you're going into the sequel with sky-high expectations. That game became a smash hit with critics and fans by reinventing the series, dropping longtime protagonist Kratos into a new Norse mythology setting and evolving him from a gruff, god-slaying machine to a father trying to do better for his son, Atreus. Though it put a great deal of effort into showcasing storytelling, the game didn't skimp on the action, either, with meaty combat systems that weren't afraid to offer a challenge. To build on that momentum, any sequel would need to keep the surprises coming—not to mention successfully deliver on the epic confrontations teased four years ago.

Suffice it to say, *God of War Ragnarök* does not disappoint. Santa

Monica Studio has built a sequel that's bigger in size and more epic in scope without ever losing sight of the characters at the heart of its story. While we won't delve into any spoilers here (not even for the last game, since you should really play that beforehand), we'll just say that Kratos

and Atreus's previous actions have kicked off a chain of events foretold to bring about Ragnarök—a massive battle that will destroy all nine realms of existence.

Unsurprisingly, that's attracted the attention of the Norse gods—namely Thor, who now bears a deeply

## FACT FILE

PUBLISHER	SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER	SANTA MONICA STUDIO
PLATFORMS	PS5, PS4
RELEASE DATE	11.09.22





■ The dwarf Brok is still happy to lend you his smithing talents—or an off-color joke.

personal grudge against Kratos, and Odin, the pantheon's one-eyed leader. These are just two of the many new characters *Ragnarök* weaves into its story, fleshing out the world in satisfying ways.

Speaking of, Kratos and Atreus can now venture to all nine realms of the World Tree. The three new additions—Vanaheim, Asgard, and Svar-talheim—have certainly been worth the wait, and the returning realms have been completely reimagined with either entirely new areas, twists

on locations you've already visited, or both. For instance, Alfheim, the home of the elves, has been dramatically changed as a result of our heroes' past intervention in the war between Light Elves and Dark Elves—and it's got an entirely new, sprawling desert area to explore, as well.

And yes, the combat here is somehow even better than it was before. New movement abilities allow for

**And yes, the combat here is somehow even better than it was before.**



faster-paced battles in arenas with greater verticality, and the expanded slate of enemies to fight constantly keeps you on your toes. (You definitely won't be fighting the same troll a dozen times this go around.) Kratos adds a new weapon to his arsenal, too, one that's every bit as satisfying to use as the now iconic Leviathan Axe and Blades of Chaos. Being able to swap between three different weapons on the fly without skipping a beat makes for truly thrilling show-downs, especially in the imaginative set-piece boss fights.

With so many across-the-board improvements and a satisfying, if bittersweet, conclusion to this chapter of the saga, *God of War Ragnarök* is one adventure you won't want to miss. ☀





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SYBERIA: THE WORLD BEFORE

## LUCAS LAGRAVETTE

**GAME DIRECTOR AND LEAD WRITER** MICOIDS STUDIO PARIS

First released just over 20 years ago, *Syberia* was a graphic adventure game created and designed by late Belgian artist Benoît Sokal. In the years that followed, protagonist Kate Walker would set off on a number of fantastical adventures across an alternate-reality Europe, acting as a guide for players as they experienced gripping stories, human drama, and countless puzzles. Now, the series and its heroine return in *Syberia: The World Before*—but this time, Kate is joined by a second main character, Dana Roze. To learn more about the game, we traveled to a cozy cafe at a hidden location in Europe to talk over coffee with its director and lead writer, Lucas Lagravette.

**WGC:** For those not familiar with the series, can you give us a brief idea of the story and gameplay ideas behind *Syberia: The World Before*?

**Lucas Lagravette:** *Syberia* is a story of emancipation. Our heroine, Kate Walker, decides to give up her once shallow existence as a New York lawyer to pursue a life of adventure and altruism in a fictional Europe conceived by the series creator, Benoît Sokal. Despite its many similarities, the world of *Syberia* is not our own, and is filled with automatons and fantastical creatures.

I would describe *Syberia: The World Before* as a “neo point-and-click narrative adventure.” That is, a title that offers you an experience centered on immersion, where your sense of exploration and your astuteness in solving puzzles and enigmas moves the story forward. It’s also one that can be discovered at your own pace, without punishing players for any lack of “skill” with the controller.

**WGC:** With the *Syberia* series always putting a strong focus on storyline, what were some of the ideas you and the team wanted to tackle in *Syberia: The World Before*?

**LL:** First of all, the great emphasis on the psychology of its main characters—starting with Kate Walker, with the continuation of her evolution based perhaps more than before on doubt and introspection. Then, to play on temporalities. *Syberia: The World Before* introduces a new playable character, Dana Roze, capturing specific moments in her life during the historical events of the 20th century in this fantasy world that so closely resembles our own. We use this alternation between eras both for storytelling and gameplay purposes—events in Dana’s past sometimes allow us

### CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

**AGATHA CHRISTIE: THE ABC MURDERS,**  
**SUBJECT 13**

to progress what’s happening in the present with Kate.

**WGC:** Of course, *Syberia: The World Before* isn’t just about story. What did the team do to enhance and improve its gameplay beyond the previous chapters?

**LL:** In order to make the game both fully playable with a single mouse on PC and a controller on consoles, we had to design [not only] each level, but also each game system, almost twice. We then took each “brick” of the game—the puzzles, the dialogue system, the movements, the inventory, etc.—and sought to modernize them to current standards without ever compromising their specific charms. This was a delicate balancing act, which also had to take into account the constant alternation between two eras and two characters, as well as our fierce desire to include an optional help system that was as complete as possible without ever breaking the narrative.

**WGC:** If you could enter the world of *Syberia: The World Before* as a new NPC to help either Kate or Dana in their journey, would you?

**LL:** Given some of the tragic events in her life, the immediate temptation would be to become an NPC from Dana’s time and seek to warn her. But I’m sure that would turn out like those nightmares we sometimes have, where what we’re trying to avoid at all costs ends up happening anyway.

The real answer, I think, would be to give up the somewhat paternalistic temptation to “guide” Kate and Dana. We are trying to build them as characters who are constantly realizing their own strength and seeking more independence. The best thing to do is to let them be the masters of their own destiny and actions—contrary to what many people they meet try to make them believe, they make the right decisions! ☺

**“I would describe *Syberia: The World Before* as a ‘neo point-and-click narrative adventure.’”**

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